

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

MARWAN T. MUSTAFA,

Plaintiff,

-against-

NEW YORK CITY, DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTION NYC AND UNNAMED
INDIVIDUALS,

Defendants.

23-CV-6516 (LTS)

ORDER TO AMEND

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN, Chief United States District Judge:

Plaintiff Marwan Mustafa, who currently is incarcerated at the Vernon C. Bain Center in the Bronx, filed this *pro se* action seeking damages and naming the City of New York, the New York City Department of Correction (“DOC”), and “unnamed persons” as defendants. He states facts suggesting that correctional staff on Rikers Island violated his constitutional rights. The Court therefore construes Plaintiff’s complaint as asserting claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 as well as under state law.

By order dated August 1, 2023, the Court granted Plaintiff’s request to proceed *in forma pauperis* (“IFP”), that is, without prepayment of fees.¹ For the reasons set forth below, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to file an amended complaint within 60 days of the date of this order.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Prison Litigation Reform Act requires that federal courts screen complaints brought by prisoners who seek relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The Court must dismiss a prisoner’s IFP

¹ Prisoners are not exempt from paying the full filing fee, even when they have been granted permission to proceed IFP. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

complaint, or any portion of the complaint, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b); *see Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir. 2007). The Court must also dismiss a complaint if the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. *See Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3)*.

While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they suggest,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted, emphasis in original). But the “special solicitude” in *pro se* cases, *id.* at 475 (citation omitted), has its limits – to state a claim, *pro se* pleadings still must comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires a complaint to make a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.

Rule 8 requires a complaint to include enough facts to state a claim for relief “that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A claim is facially plausible if the plaintiff pleads enough factual detail to allow the Court to draw the inference that the defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). In reviewing the complaint, the Court must accept all well-pleaded factual allegations as true. *Id.* But it does not have to accept as true “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action,” which are essentially just legal conclusions. *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). After separating legal conclusions from well-pleaded factual allegations, the Court must determine whether those facts make it plausible – not merely possible – that the pleader is entitled to relief. *Id.* at 679.

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleges that, between May 26, 2023, and June 25, 2023, while he was held as a pretrial detainee on Rikers Island, correction officers retaliated against him because he assisted another detained individual, Andre Antrobus. Specifically, he alleges,

I heard numerous stories from older gentle men who died time before say they use to abuse Andre Antrobus abuse and associated in 1999 to 2006 to 2010 and up with orders from the D.A. and management for C.O.C. employees to block his defense . . . [They] attack[ed] Mr. Antrobus for 16 months then C.O.s keep threatening them and saying the Courts and DOC every day change the rules and laws every day to keep up to Mr. Antrobus.²

(ECF 1, at 4.) Since Plaintiff’s arrival on Rikers Island, “they warn people every day if you help Mr. Antrobus the same thing happen to you.” (*Id.*) In support of this allegation, Plaintiff states, “I witness several times mail come back from other inmates names to Mr. Antrobus. I witness the attack[] in bathroom and taken of evidence and like 2 weeks ago they rus[h]ed him and called him to [] steal 300.00 in property and evidence.” (*Id.*) Despite these warnings, Plaintiff indicates he too assisted Antrobus: “[N]ow I started helping him send mail D.O.C. sent inmates to gang assault me in the bathroom several times hits to my head.” (*Id.*) He also indicates that correctional staff are “blocking my mail and opening it using ruses like you can’t send indigent, legal mail, or certified mail in standard . . . white envelope that’s stated on the instructions in the law library[.]” (*Id.* at 5.) Finally, he claims that “favorable exonerating evidence” has been seized.”

In the injury section of his complaint, Plaintiff states, “tra[u]ma to head and back lack medical attention mental and emotional anguish . . . blocking my defense blocking my mail.”

² The Court quotes from the complaint verbatim. All spelling, grammar, and punctuation are as in the original, unless otherwise noted.

(*Id.*) He also claims that correctional staff “put a bounty 4 hit they put is on me.” (*Id.*) He seeks money damages. (*Id.*)

DISCUSSION

A. Claims on Behalf of Andre Antrobus

To the extent Plaintiff seeks to assert any claims on behalf of Andre Antrobus, the Court dismisses those claims.³ The statutory provision governing appearances in federal court, 28 U.S.C. § 1654, allows two types of representation: “that by an attorney admitted to the practice of law by a governmental regulatory body, and that by a person representing himself.” *Eagle Assocs. v. Bank of Montreal*, 926 F.2d 1305, 1308 (2d Cir. 1991) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “[B]ecause *pro se* means to appear for one’s self, a person may not appear on another person’s behalf in the other’s cause. A person must be litigating an interest personal to him.” *Iannaccone v. Law*, 142 F.3d 553, 558 (2d Cir. 1998).

Plaintiff has not alleged any facts suggesting that he is an attorney. The Court therefore dismisses without prejudice any claims Plaintiff seeks to bring on behalf of Antrobus.

B. Claims Against the DOC and the City of New York

Plaintiff brings claims against the DOC; as an agency of the City of New York, however, the DOC is not a separate entity that can be sued. N.Y. City Charter ch. 17, § 396 (“[A]ll actions and proceedings for the recovery of penalties for the violation of any law shall be brought in the name of the city of New York and not in that of any agency, except where otherwise provided by

³ Plaintiff is not the first person in DOC custody to assert claims involving Antrobus. *See, e.g., Pena-Sanchez v. New York City*, ECF 1:22-CV-4942, 7 (S.D.N.Y. July 20, 2023) (asserting that correctional staff violated his rights in part based on his relationship with Antrobus); *Okeefe v. Dep’t of Corr.*, ECF 1:23-CV-6388, 1 (S.D.N.Y.) (same) (order to amend issued July 26, 2023); *Bush v. New York City*, ECF 1:23-CV-5386, 1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 10, 2023) (same); *Matias v. New York City*, ECF 1:23-CV-4990, 1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 11, 2023) (same); *Cooper v. Dep’t of Corr. NYC*, ECF 1:23-CV-4885, 1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 14, 2023) (same).

law.”); *Jenkins v. City of New York*, 478 F.3d 76, 93 n.19 (2d Cir. 2007); *see also Emerson v. City of New York*, 740 F. Supp. 2d 385, 395 (S.D.N.Y. 2010) (“[A] plaintiff is generally prohibited from suing a municipal agency.”). The Court therefore dismisses Plaintiff’s claims against the DOC for failure to state a claim on which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).

Plaintiff also fails to state a claim under Section 1983 against the City of New York. When a plaintiff sues a municipality, such as the City of New York, under Section 1983, it is not enough for the plaintiff to allege that one of the municipality’s employees or agents engaged in some wrongdoing. The plaintiff must show that the municipality itself caused the violation of the plaintiff’s rights. *See Connick v. Thompson*, 563 U.S. 51, 60 (2011) (“A municipality or other local government may be liable under this section [1983] if the governmental body itself ‘subjects’ a person to a deprivation of rights or ‘causes’ a person ‘to be subjected’ to such deprivation.” (quoting *Monell v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs. of City of New York*, 436 U.S. 658, 692 (1978))); *Cash v. Cnty. of Erie*, 654 F.3d 324, 333 (2d Cir. 2011). In other words, to state a claim under Section 1983 against a municipality, the plaintiff must allege facts showing: (1) the existence of a municipal policy, custom, or practice; and (2) that the policy, custom, or practice caused the violation of the plaintiff’s constitutional rights. *Jones v. Town of East Haven*, 691 F.3d 72, 80 (2d Cir. 2012); *see Bd. of Cnty. Comm’rs of Bryan Cnty. v. Brown*, 520 U.S. 397, 403 (1997) (internal citations omitted).

Plaintiff’s complaint does not state facts suggesting that a policy, custom, or practice of the City of New York caused a violation of his federal constitutional rights. For example, Plaintiff alleges that correctional staff “sent” other detainees to assault Plaintiff. While this allegation would suggest the involvement of individual officers, it does not suggest that a

municipal policy, custom, or practice caused this alleged injury. Accordingly, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend this claim to assert facts suggesting the City of New York's involvement in the violation of Plaintiff's rights. Should Plaintiff seek relief against the City of New York, he should name the City as a defendant.

C. Claims Against Individuals

The Court understands that by naming “unnamed persons” as defendants, Plaintiff is attempting to assert claims under Section 1983 against individual correctional staff. To state a claim under Section 1983 against such individuals, a plaintiff must allege facts showing that those individuals were directly and personally involved in an alleged constitutional deprivation. *See Spavone v. N.Y. State Dep't of Corr. Serv.*, 719 F.3d 127, 135 (2d Cir. 2013) (“It is well settled in this Circuit that personal involvement of defendants in the alleged constitutional deprivations is a prerequisite to an award of damages under § 1983.” (internal quotation marks omitted)). A defendant may not be held liable under Section 1983 solely because that defendant employs or supervises a person who violated the plaintiff's rights. *See Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676 (“Government officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of *respondeat superior*.”). Rather, “[t]o hold a state official liable under § 1983, a plaintiff must plead and prove the elements of the underlying constitutional violation directly against the official[.]” *Tangreti v. Bachmann*, 983 F.3d 609, 620 (2d Cir. 2020).

Plaintiff does not identify or describe any individual officer, or allege facts suggesting that any officer violated Plaintiff's rights. In light of Plaintiff's *pro se* status, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to file an amended complaint in which he names individual officers as defendants

and alleges facts suggesting those defendants’ direct and personal involvement in the alleged violations of his constitutional rights.⁴

D. Interference with Mail and Evidence

The Court liberally construes Plaintiff’s allegations regarding interference with his mail and confiscation of favorable evidence, as asserting an access-to-courts claim and a general mail-tampering claim. These types of claims are grounded in a prisoner’s First Amendment rights to “adequate, effective and meaningful” access to the courts and to the free flow of incoming and outgoing mail. *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817, 822 (1977), *abrogated on other grounds*, *Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343 (1996); *Davis v. Goord*, 320 F.3d 346, 351 (2d Cir. 2003). “[C]ourts have consistently afforded greater protection to legal mail than to non-legal mail, as well as greater protection to outgoing mail than to incoming mail.” *Davis*, 320 F.3d at 351 (citing *Thornburgh v. Abbott*, 490 U.S. 401, 413 (1989)).

1. Access to the Courts

Incarcerated individuals have a “constitutional right of access to the courts [that] gives rise to a number of derivative rights, including the right to access legal materials to prepare a case, and the right of indigent inmates to be provided with paper and pens to draft legal documents and stamps to mail them.” *Collins v. Goord*, 581 F. Supp. 2d 563, 573 (S.D.N.Y. 2008) (citing *Bounds*, 430 U.S. at 824-28). Protecting these rights “requires prison authorities to assist inmates in the preparation and filing of meaningful legal papers by providing prisoners with adequate law libraries or adequate assistance from persons trained in the law.” *Bourdon v. Loughren*, 386 F.3d 88, 92 (2d Cir. 2004) (quoting *Bounds*, 430 U.S. at 828 (internal quotation

⁴ Instructions as to how to name unidentified “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” defendants can be found in the “Leave to Amend” section of this order.

marks omitted)). Assistance from prison authorities, however, is “only the means for ensuring a reasonably adequate opportunity to present claimed violations of fundamental constitutional rights to the courts.” *Casey*, 518 U.S. at 351 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

To state a claim for denial of access to the courts, a plaintiff must allege facts showing that “the defendant took or was responsible for actions that hindered [a plaintiff’s] efforts to pursue a legal claim.” *Davis*, 320 F.3d at 351 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted, alteration in original); see *Christopher v. Harbury*, 536 U.S. 403, 415 (2002). A plaintiff must show actual injury with regard to his legal claim – “actual prejudice with respect to contemplated or existing litigation, such as the inability to meet a filing deadline or to present a claim.” *Casey*, 518 U.S. at 348 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). To demonstrate actual injury, a plaintiff must allege: (1) a valid underlying cause of action separate from the right-of-access claim; and (2) frustration or hindrance of the litigation caused by the defendant’s actions. See *Harbury*, 536 U.S. at 415.

A mere “delay in being able to work on one’s legal action or communicate with the courts does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation.” *Jermosen v. Coughlin*, 877 F. Supp. 864, 871 (S.D.N.Y. 1995) (citing *Jones v. Smith*, 784 F.2d 149, 151-52 (2d Cir. 1986)). Furthermore, when a prisoner with appointed counsel claims that prison officials hindered his efforts to defend himself or pursue other legal claims, “he must show that, on the facts of his case, the provision of counsel did not furnish him with the capability of bringing his challenges before the courts.” *Bourdon*, 386 F.3d at 98.

Here, Plaintiff does not state an access to courts claim because he does not allege facts suggesting that correctional staff hindered his ability to pursue a legal action that is not frivolous. Moreover, if Plaintiff is alleging that his criminal proceedings form the basis of his underlying

claims, assuming he is represented by counsel in those proceedings, he cannot state an access to courts claim, as his counsel would be in the position to assert his legal claims on his behalf. *See Bourdon*, 386 F.3d at 98. In light of Plaintiff's *pro se* status, however, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend this claim. Should Plaintiff intend to pursue this claim, he must name as defendants the correctional staff whom he alleges denied him access to the courts and allege facts suggesting that he was hindered from pursuing an arguably meritorious legal claim for which he is not represented by counsel.

2. Mail Tampering

To state a claim based on general mail tampering under the First Amendment, a prisoner must allege that the incidents of mail tampering: “(1) . . . suggest[] an ongoing practice of censorship unjustified by a substantial government interest, or (2) . . . [have] unjustifiably chilled the prisoner's right of access to the court or impaired his legal representation. *Davis*, 320 F.3d at 351. “[A]n isolated incident of mail tampering is usually insufficient to establish a constitutional violation.” *Id.* at 351. As few as two incidents of mail tampering, however, may constitute a First Amendment violation if indicative of “regular” and “unjustifiable” interference with a prisoner's mail. *Id.*; *see Washington v. James*, 782 F.2d 1134, 1139 (2d Cir. 1986).

Plaintiff does not allege enough facts to suggest that correctional staff interfered or tampered with his mail in a manner that rises to the level of a constitutional violation. He asserts that personnel opened, damaged, and “blocked” his mail, all of which do not suggest unjustified government censorship or tampering. Accordingly, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend this claim by naming as defendants the individual officers whom he alleges violated his rights and by alleging additional facts suggesting that the named individual defendants subjected him to regular and unjustifiable interference with his mail.

E. First Amendment Retaliation

In his complaint, Plaintiff suggests that correctional staff retaliated against him for providing assistance to Antrobus. Plaintiff's assertions could be read as an attempt to assert a First Amendment retaliation claim.

To state a retaliation claim, a plaintiff must allege: “(1) that the speech or conduct at issue was protected, (2) that the defendant took adverse action against the [prisoner], and (3) that there was a causal connection between the protected [conduct] and the adverse action.” *Holland v. Goord*, 758 F.3d 215, 225 (2d Cir. 2014) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted, second alteration in original). An adverse action is any “retaliatory conduct that would deter a similarly situated individual of ordinary firmness from exercising his or her constitutional rights.” *Davis*, 320 F.3d at 353 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). The facts alleged also must suggest “that the speech [or conduct] played a substantial part in the adverse action.” *Id.* at 354 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). For example, “[a] plaintiff can establish a causal connection that suggests retaliation by showing that protected activity was close in time to the adverse action.” *Espinal v. Goord*, 558 F.3d 119, 129 (2d Cir. 2009); *see also Mateo v. Fischer*, 682 F. Supp. 2d 423, 435 (S.D.N.Y. 2010) (endorsing incorporation of circumstantial evidence of causation “where the adverse action occurs soon after the protected activity,” and holding that, where a false misbehavior report was filed one day after a prisoner filed a grievance, the causation requirement was met) (citation omitted).

First Amendment retaliation claims must be “supported by specific and detailed factual allegations,” and may not be stated “in wholly conclusory terms.” *Dolan v. Connolly*, 794 F.3d 290, 295 (2d Cir. 2015) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

Here, Plaintiff does not provide sufficient facts to support a claim for retaliation. First, Plaintiff does not allege any facts regarding his engaging in any protected activity under the First

Amendment or the connection between his conduct and any alleged adverse actions taken against him. *See Espinal*, 558 F.3d at 129. Finally, he does not allege who retaliated against him.

The Court grants Plaintiff leave to allege facts in support of a claim of retaliation under Section 1983. Should Plaintiff amend his retaliation claim, he must allege facts describing the protected conduct in which he engaged, the adverse action, the causal connection between his protected activity and any adverse action, and the individuals who retaliated against him.

F. Failure to Protect

The Court construes Plaintiff's allegation that correctional staff ordered other detained individuals to assault Plaintiff as a failure to protect claim under the Fourteenth Amendment. Prison officials are required to take reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of prisoners, including protecting them from harm caused by other prisoners. *See Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 832-33 (1994); *Fischl v. Armitage*, 128 F.3d 50, 55 (2d Cir. 1997). A pretrial detainee asserting a failure to protect claim under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause must plead two elements: (1) an "objective" element, which requires a showing that the risk of harm is sufficiently serious, and (2) a "mental" element, which requires a showing that the officer knew or should have known of the risk of serious harm but acted with deliberate indifference to that risk. *Darnell v. Pineiro*, 849 F.3d 17, 29 (2d Cir. 2017); *Walker v. Schult*, 717 F.3d 119, 125 (2d Cir. 2013) ("Evidence that a risk was obvious or otherwise must have been known to a defendant may be sufficient for a fact finder to conclude that the defendant was actually aware of the risk." (quotation marks omitted)).

The mere negligence of a correctional official is not a basis for a claim of a federal constitutional violation under Section 1983. *See Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327, 335-36 (1986); *Davidson v. Cannon*, 474 U.S. 344, 348 (1986); *Morales v. New York State Dep't of Corr.*, 842 F.2d 27 (2d Cir. 1988) ("[A] prisoner cannot base a federal civil rights action brought

under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 on claims of a negligent failure of state prison officials to protect him from injury at the hands of another inmate[.]”).

Here, Plaintiff does not allege sufficient facts to state a failure to protect claim. He alleges that unidentified DOC staff “sent” other detainees to assault Plaintiff (ECF 1, at 4), but he does not name as a defendant any individual correction officer who was personally involved in violating his rights. Nor does he allege any specific facts to support his contention that a correction officer ordered other detainees to assault Plaintiff. Finally, Plaintiff does not provide any basic facts such as when or where the alleged assaults occurred, or the specific events surrounding the alleged assaults.

The Court grants Plaintiff leave to amend his complaint to name an individual defendant and to allege additional facts to state a viable failure to protect claim under Section 1983.

LEAVE TO AMEND

Plaintiff proceeds in this matter without the benefit of an attorney. Federal district courts generally should grant a self-represented plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its defects, unless amendment would be futile. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123-24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Indeed, the Second Circuit has cautioned that district courts “should not dismiss [a *pro se* complaint] without granting leave to amend at least once when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000) (quoting *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 795 (2d Cir. 1999)). Because Plaintiff may be able to allege additional facts to state valid claimd under Section 1983, the Court grants Plaintiff 60 days’ leave to amend his complaint to detail his claims.

A. John Doe or Jane Doe Defendants

Plaintiff must name as the defendant(s) in the caption⁵ and in the statement of claim those individuals who were allegedly involved in the deprivation of his federal rights. If Plaintiff does not know the name of a defendant, he may refer to that individual as “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” in both the caption and the body of the amended complaint.⁶ The naming of Doe defendants, however, does *not* toll the three-year statute of limitations period governing Plaintiff’s claims under Section 1983, and Plaintiff shall be responsible for ascertaining the true identity of any Doe defendants and amending his complaint to include the identity of such defendants before the statute of limitations period expires. Should Plaintiff seek to add a new claim or party after the statute of limitations period has expired, he must meet the requirements of Rule 15(c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

B. Statement of Claim

In the “Statement of Claim” section of the amended complaint form, Plaintiff must provide a short and plain statement of the relevant facts supporting each claim against each defendant. If Plaintiff has an address for any named defendant, he must provide it. Plaintiff should include all of the information in the amended complaint that he wants the Court to consider in deciding whether the amended complaint states a claim for relief. That information should include:

⁵ The caption is located on the front page of the complaint. Each individual defendant must be named in the caption. Plaintiff may attach additional pages if there is not enough space to list all of the defendants in the caption. If Plaintiff needs to attach an additional page to list all defendants, he should write “see attached list” on the first page of the amended complaint. Any defendants named in the caption must also be discussed in Plaintiff’s statement of claim.

⁶ For example, a defendant may be identified as: “Correction Officer John Doe #1 on duty on August 31, 2023, at the [name of the facility], during [times of shift].”

- a) the names and titles of all relevant people;
- b) a description of all relevant events, including what each defendant did or failed to do, the approximate date and time of each event, and the general location where each event occurred;
- c) a description of the injuries Plaintiff suffered; and
- d) the relief Plaintiff seeks, such as money damages, injunctive relief, or declaratory relief.

Essentially, Plaintiff's amended complaint should tell the Court: who violated his federally protected rights; how, when, and where such violations occurred; and why Plaintiff is entitled to relief.

Because Plaintiff's amended complaint will completely replace, not supplement, the original complaint, any facts or claims that Plaintiff wants to include from the original complaint must be repeated in the amended complaint.

C. New York Legal Assistance Group

Plaintiff may consult the legal clinic in this District that assists people who are parties in civil cases and do not have lawyers. The Clinic is run by a private organization called the New York Legal Assistance Group ("NYLAG"); it is not part of, or run by, the court (and, among other things, therefore cannot accept filings on behalf of the court, which must still be made by any *pro se* party through the Pro Se Intake Unit).

To receive limited-scope assistance from the Clinic, Plaintiff may mail a signed retainer and intake form to the NYLAG Pro Se Clinic at 40 Foley Square, LL22, NY, NY 10007. Once the paperwork is received, the Clinic will coordinate contact with the litigant. Once the paperwork is received, it may take up to two weeks for the Clinic to contact the litigant. Copies of the Clinic's flyer, retainer, and intake form are attached to this order.

CONCLUSION

The Court grants Plaintiff leave to file an amended complaint that complies with the standards set forth above. Plaintiff must submit the amended complaint to this Court's Pro Se Intake Unit within 60 days of the date of this order, caption the document as an "Amended Complaint," and label the document with docket number 23-CV-6516 (LTS). An Amended Civil Rights Complaint form is attached to this order. No summonses will issue at this time. If Plaintiff fails to comply within the time allowed, and he cannot show good cause to excuse such failure, the Court will issue an order dismissing Plaintiff's claims failure to state a claim on which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).⁷

Copies of NYLAG's flyer, retainer, and intake form are attached to this order.

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore IFP status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *Cf. Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962) (holding that an appellant demonstrates good faith when he seeks review of a nonfrivolous issue).

SO ORDERED.

Dated: October 27, 2023
New York, New York

/s/ Laura Taylor Swain

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN
Chief United States District Judge

⁷ Plaintiff may request the appointment of *pro bono* counsel after he files an amended complaint in compliance with this order.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Write the full name of each plaintiff.

-against-

____ CV ____
(Include case number if one has been assigned)

**AMENDED
COMPLAINT**
(Prisoner)

Do you want a jury trial?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Write the full name of each defendant. If you cannot fit the names of all of the defendants in the space provided, please write "see attached" in the space above and attach an additional sheet of paper with the full list of names. The names listed above must be identical to those contained in Section IV.

NOTICE

The public can access electronic court files. For privacy and security reasons, papers filed with the court should therefore *not* contain: an individual's full social security number or full birth date; the full name of a person known to be a minor; or a complete financial account number. A filing may include *only*: the last four digits of a social security number; the year of an individual's birth; a minor's initials; and the last four digits of a financial account number. See Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5.2.

I. LEGAL BASIS FOR CLAIM

State below the federal legal basis for your claim, if known. This form is designed primarily for prisoners challenging the constitutionality of their conditions of confinement; those claims are often brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (against state, county, or municipal defendants) or in a “*Bivens*” action (against federal defendants).

☐ Violation of my federal constitutional rights

☐ Other: _____

II. PLAINTIFF INFORMATION

Each plaintiff must provide the following information. Attach additional pages if necessary.

First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name
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State any other names (or different forms of your name) you have ever used, including any name you have used in previously filing a lawsuit.

Prisoner ID # (if you have previously been in another agency’s custody, please specify each agency and the ID number (such as your DIN or NYSID) under which you were held)

Current Place of Detention

Institutional Address

County, City	State	Zip Code
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III. PRISONER STATUS

Indicate below whether you are a prisoner or other confined person:

☐ Pretrial detainee

☐ Civilly committed detainee

☐ Immigration detainee

☐ Convicted and sentenced prisoner

☐ Other: _____

IV. DEFENDANT INFORMATION

To the best of your ability, provide the following information for each defendant. If the correct information is not provided, it could delay or prevent service of the complaint on the defendant. Make sure that the defendants listed below are identical to those listed in the caption. Attach additional pages as necessary.

Defendant 1:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 2:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 3:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 4:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

V. STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Place(s) of occurrence: _____

Date(s) of occurrence: _____

FACTS:

State here briefly the FACTS that support your case. Describe what happened, how you were harmed, and how each defendant was personally involved in the alleged wrongful actions. Attach additional pages as necessary.

[illegible]

INJURIES:

If you were injured as a result of these actions, describe your injuries and what medical treatment, if any, you required and received.

VI. RELIEF

State briefly what money damages or other relief you want the court to order.

VII. PLAINTIFF'S CERTIFICATION AND WARNINGS

By signing below, I certify to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief that: (1) the complaint is not being presented for an improper purpose (such as to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation); (2) the claims are supported by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument to change existing law; (3) the factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, will likely have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and (4) the complaint otherwise complies with the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 11.

I understand that if I file three or more cases while I am a prisoner that are dismissed as frivolous, malicious, or for failure to state a claim, I may be denied *in forma pauperis* status in future cases.

I also understand that prisoners must exhaust administrative procedures before filing an action in federal court about prison conditions, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), and that my case may be dismissed if I have not exhausted administrative remedies as required.

I agree to provide the Clerk's Office with any changes to my address. I understand that my failure to keep a current address on file with the Clerk's Office may result in the dismissal of my case.

Each Plaintiff must sign and date the complaint. Attach additional pages if necessary. If seeking to proceed without prepayment of fees, each plaintiff must also submit an IFP application.

Dated	Plaintiff's Signature
First Name	Middle Initial
	Last Name
Prison Address	
County, City	State
	Zip Code

Date on which I am delivering this complaint to prison authorities for mailing: _____



New York  Legal Assistance Group

**LEGAL CLINIC FOR PRO SE LITIGANTS IN THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

LIMITED SCOPE LEGAL ASSISTANCE RETAINER AGREEMENT

You retain the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) to provide you with limited scope legal assistance through its Legal Clinic for Pro Se Litigants in the Southern District of New York (Clinic) under the terms set forth below.

I. LIMITS OF ASSISTANCE

The Clinic agrees to provide only limited scope legal assistance in connection with your matter.

This means that:

- You remain a self-represented (pro se) litigant and are responsible for all aspects of your case. NYLAG is not your attorney of record in this matter. In the event that you are or become a party to a case in the Southern District of New York or any other forum, NYLAG will not enter an appearance or otherwise act on your behalf without expressly agreeing to do so and entering into a separate signed agreement with you. NYLAG has no obligation to enter into any such agreement.
- NYLAG has sole discretion to determine the specific type of services provided. These services may include providing advice and counsel about your case, explaining court orders and procedures, reviewing and commenting on your drafts, assisting with drafting, and discussing strategy.
- This retainer covers an initial consultation only. NYLAG can stop assisting you with this matter at any time for any reason consistent with the New York Rules of Professional Conduct.
- NYLAG has not agreed to represent or assist you on any other matter in the future. If NYLAG does agree to any representation on another matter, then a separate signed retainer agreement will be necessary.
- You may request but are not guaranteed subsequent appointments. NYLAG will only provide assistance on subsequent appointments if it provides you with confirmation to you of such assistance, via email or otherwise, with such additional assistance governed by the terms of this agreement, including that the assistance is for that consultation only and that NYLAG has sole discretion to decide whether it will provide any additional future consultations. You are responsible for and must meet all deadlines in your case, regardless of whether you are able to have an appointment with the Clinic.

II. FREE ASSISTANCE, NON-ATTORNEY PROVIDERS, AND COMPETENCY

NYLAG does not charge for this assistance. You may be assisted by law students and/or paralegals under the supervision of an attorney consistent with the Rules of Professional Responsibility. NYLAG's assistance does not guarantee success or any particular outcome but that NYLAG will provide competent assistance.

III. TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to stop receiving NYLAG's limited scope assistance at any time. NYLAG may stop providing limited assistance at its sole discretion consistent with the New York Rules of Professional Conduct. If NYLAG chooses to stop providing limited assistance, it will provide notice by email, mail, or phone.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY

NYLAG will take all reasonable steps to maintain any information you provide as confidential.

V. REVIEW AND CONSENT

By signing and writing today's date below, you indicate that you: have read and understand this agreement; consent to the terms of this agreement; and understand the possible risks and benefits of proceeding with limited scope assistance.

If you have questions or concerns, please indicate on this form and someone will arrange to speak with you.

Signature

Date

Once you have completed this form, please mail it and the completed demographic form to the New York Legal Assistance Group, Pro Se Clinic, 40 Foley Square, LL22, New York, NY 10007.

Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Facility _____

Identification # _____

Email (if available) _____

How did you hear about our clinic? (Circle One)

Pro Se Intake Office

Order/Letter from the Judge

Conference/Hearing with the Judge

Pro Se Information Package

Website

Friend/Family

Other _____

Ethnicity (Circle One)

Asian/Pacific Islander

Hispanic

Caucasian

African American

Middle Eastern

Decline to Answer

African

Caribbean

Native American

South Asian

Education Level (Circle One)

8th Grade or Less

GED

2-4 years of College/Vocational School

Some high school

College graduate

Decline to Answer

High school graduate

Graduate degree

Gender: _____

SDNY Case Number: _____

Once you have completed this form, please mail it and the completed retainer to the New York Legal Assistance Group, Pro Se Clinic, 40 Foley Square, LL22, New York, NY 10007.



Since 1990, NYLAG has provided free civil legal services to New Yorkers who cannot afford private attorneys.

Free Legal Assistance for Self-Represented Incarcerated Civil Litigants in Federal District Court

The NYLAG Legal Clinic for Pro Se Litigants in the Southern District of New York is a free legal clinic staffed by attorneys, law students, and paralegals to assist those who are representing themselves or planning to represent themselves, including incarcerated litigants, in civil lawsuits in the Southern District of New York federal court, excluding habeas cases. The clinic is not part of or run by the court.

Even if a litigant has consulted with Clinic staff, unless they retain other counsel and that counsel enters a notice of appearance, they remain unrepresented; are responsible for doing whatever is necessary in connection with the case; and must still submit all court papers to the Pro Se Intake Unit, located in Room 105 of the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Courthouse, 40 Foley Square, New York, New York, or by following the court's instructions for filing via email as a pro se litigant.

The Clinic Can:

- Assist with amending complaints and responding to motions to dismiss;
- Represent litigants for settlement purposes and, in limited circumstances, for depositions;
- Assist with written discovery;
- Recruit pro bono counsel for depositions and trial; and
- Assist with oppositions to summary judgment.

Clinic staff cannot assist with habeas cases or criminal matters.

NYLAG may also be unable to assist if it determines, in its professional legal judgement, that (i) you have refused to cooperate with the Clinic's counsel or follow the Clinic's advice; (ii) any assistance would be unreasonably difficult for NYLAG to carry out; or (iii) your case is or will become frivolous, unreasonable, groundless, or without merit.

Contacting the Clinic:

To contact the clinic and request a copy of our retainer, please call (212) 659-6190 and leave a message or write to us at the following address:

NYLAG Legal Clinic for Pro Se Litigants
Thurgood Marshall Federal Courthouse
Room LL22
40 Foley Square
New York, NY 10007

Please mail a signed retainer back to the clinic at the above address. Once the paperwork is received, clinic staff will contact you. It may take up to two weeks.

Disclaimer: The information contained herein is for informational purposes only and is not legal advice or a substitute for legal counsel, nor does it constitute advertising or a solicitation.

The NYLAG Legal Clinic for Pro Se Litigants in the Southern District of New York provides free limited legal assistance to individuals who are representing themselves or planning to represent themselves in civil lawsuits in federal court in Manhattan and White Plains. The clinic is staffed by attorneys, law students, and paralegals. Information given to clinic staff is confidential.

Clinic Staff Can:

- Advise on filing cases in federal court, including on the issue of whether a case should be filed in the Southern District of New York or somewhere else;
- Provide legal advice in response to questions that come up at any stage of litigation;
- Assist in getting additional information or research into the legal issue in your case;
- Review and explain court orders and filings by your opponent, and provide an overview of the federal legal process in civil cases generally;
- Assist with motions, discovery, and strategy;
- Assist with getting ready for depositions, pretrial conferences, mediations, and court appearances;
- Provide forms and instructions manuals;
- In appropriate cases, help you retain pro bono counsel;
- In appropriate cases, represent you in a mediation through the Southern District's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, or a court-ordered settlement conference;
- In appropriate cases, represent you at a deposition; and
- In appropriate cases, provide referrals to other agencies and organizations that provide civil legal services and/or social services.

Clinic Staff Cannot:

- Assist with federal civil cases that belong in a different federal court, such as the Eastern District of New York, which covers New York, which covers Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Nassau and Suffolk Counties;
- Assist with an appeal of your federal case;
- Assist with state court cases, bankruptcy court cases, or criminal cases;
- Pay any of the costs associated with filing or defending a lawsuit in federal court;
- File documents with the court on your behalf;
- Appear on your behalf other than representation at a mediation through the Southern District's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, a court-ordered settlement conference, or, in appropriate cases, a deposition;
- Write court documents for you; or
- Conduct an investigation into the facts of your case.

Clinic Staff May Decline Assistance If:

- NYLAG has already given advice to your opponent;
- Your legal problem is beyond the scope of matters handled by the clinic;
- Providing assistance would conflict with the New York Rules of Professional Conduct;
- Your income and/or assets are high enough to allow you to retain private counsel; or
- NYLAG determines, in its professional legal judgement, that (i) you have refused to cooperate with the Clinic's counsel or follow the Clinic's advice; (ii) any assistance would be unreasonably difficult for NYLAG to carry out; or (iii) your case is or will become frivolous, unreasonable, groundless, or without merit.

Use of the NYLAG Legal Clinic for Pro Se Litigants is separate from any appointment of counsel by the court. A request for appointment of counsel requires a separate application and the decision whether to appoint counsel is entirely up to the court. Even if a litigant has consulted with Clinic staff, unless they retain other counsel and that counsel enters a notice of appearance, they remain unrepresented; are responsible for doing whatever is necessary in connection with the case; and must still submit all court papers to the Pro Se Intake Unit, located in Room 105 of the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Courthouse, 40 Foley Square, New York, New York, or by following the court's instructions for filing via email as a pro se litigant.